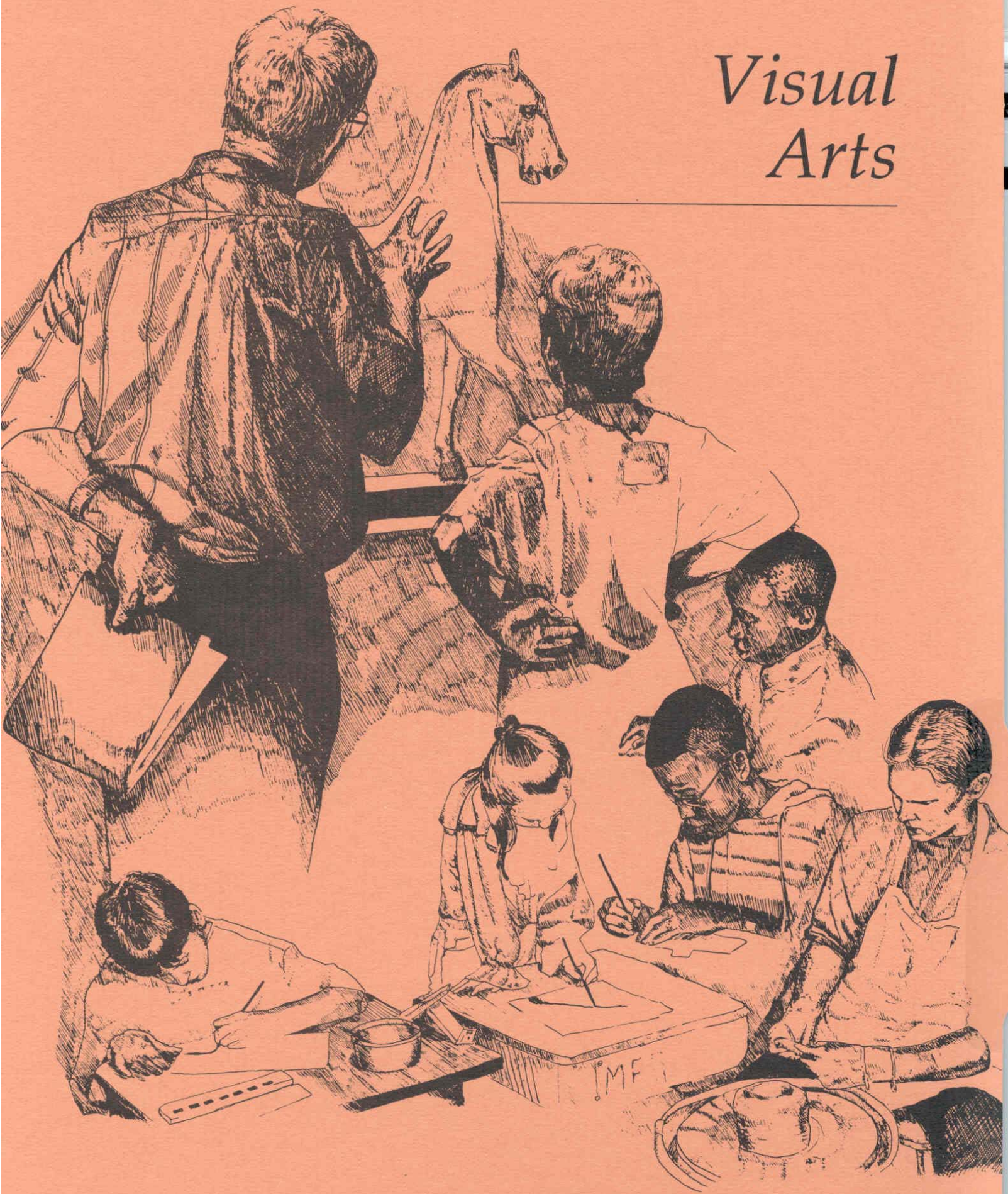


Visual Arts



Introduction to the Visual Arts

Visual images flood our society today, from images we call works of art, to television, signs and magazine ads. Every day young people interact with images that attempt to convey a message in a visual language. Just as we believe that students need to understand, analyze and use the written and spoken languages, they must understand, analyze and express themselves in visual language. The study and production of visual art in our schools enable students to become literate and informed adults in our visual worlds. The study of visual art also offers learners a new avenue for expression of emotion and ideas to all students, and especially to those who have found no other avenue of expression.

The visual arts also offer students ways to make connections to other people, times and places. Not all cultures have set aside a special category of objects called “art”; but all cultures have made objects for ritual, and decorated or embellished objects that record their lives, express their ideas and beautify their world. The study of another culture through art allows students to make direct connections to their own experiences and understanding.

While visual art should be studied for its own sake, it also offers wonderful opportunities for interdisciplinary links to other arts and other fields of study. For example, the visual arts can aid in the understanding of historical events from diverse perspectives, and art production can help students explore mathematical principles in concrete ways. In our visual world, the arts can make other fields of study come alive for learners and provide a connector to their experiences.

Our society has come to value creative people who can use imagination to offer alternative solutions to critical problems. The visual arts, which value intuition, imagination and originality, can offer ways for learners to explore their own creativity and that of others. The arts foster critical thinking because in the visual arts we seek a variety of solutions to a single problem. We need to be sure that we remember the imaginative, creative side of education. The visual arts can make education more relevant for our learners, help our young people survive and thrive in our society, reach students who have been marginalized and help students to understand diversity.

Inquiry into Visual Arts

Visual Arts	PERCEIVING	INTERPRETING	EVALUATING	CONNECTING
TECHNICAL AND CREATIVE APPROACH	What am I creating? D4	What am I trying to say? D5	Does this work? D6	What connections can I make to my art and why? D7
CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL APPROACH	What does the form of this work say about its context? D8	What does it mean in its time and culture? D9	Why is this work important? D10	What connections can I make to other times, places and cultures? D11
CRITICAL APPROACH	What are the elements and content of the work? D12	How am I reacting to this and why? D13	How good do I think this is? D14	What connections can I make to my own experience? D15
AESTHETIC APPROACH	What are the ways we can approach art? D16	How does art make meaning? D17	Is this good? D18	How does art relate to life? D19

Definitions of *Learning Process* from the Visual Arts perspective

Perceiving: Perceiving is the process by which one analyzes the form of a work of art, the vehicle that carries the idea. Through this process, we examine the “formal elements” of the work—the qualities such as a line, shape, value, texture and color—and the conceptual structure used to organize the elements.

Interpreting: It is through interpreting that we ask what a work of art expresses. We consider the subject matter of the work, what the work meant at the time it was made and the function of the work in its society. In order to understand deeper levels of meaning, we can consider a variety of factors; such as, the role of art in society, matters of artistic biography or patronage, the history of ideas, the experiences of the viewer, and other social and cultural factors.

Evaluating: It is through evaluation that we reflect on the integrity of our own work and the work of others. Evaluation calls for constant reflection of the qualities that we value in a particular work or in art in general, rather than a final judgment on whether a work is good or bad.

Connecting: It is by making connections that we consider how art relates to life. We may make connections with the life experiences of the artist, with concerns of society and with our own experiences. It can also refer to connections made between cultures and historical periods that can be made through art. Art can often be used to understand universal concerns of humankind, to express the concerns of people in a particular time and place, and to express the concerns of a particular artist.

Definitions of *Approaches* from the Visual Arts perspective

Technical and Creative Approach: This is the approach of the visual artist. Artists use various media and techniques to create art forms and to convey meaning.

Cultural/Historical Approach: This is the approach of the art historian. The art historian is particularly interested in how the artist, the historical setting of the artist, and the cultural context shape the form and meaning of the work of art.

Critical Approach: This is the approach of the art critic. The critic looks at the artist, the historical setting of the artist, the cultural context, the form and the meaning of the work of art. The critic uses the analysis of the work and its context to make a personal evaluation of the work.

Aesthetic Approach: This is the approach of the philosopher of art. Philosophers also deal with aspects of form, meaning and context, but link these to more broadly conceived themes rooted in views of the human condition. Such themes include human nature, in which aesthetics often emphasize perception, feeling and imagination. Another theme is valuing, in which philosophers often ask what it is that makes art so valuable and how aesthetic value is like or unlike other values such as cultural value, economic value or moral value.

Technical and Creative Approach

to Perceiving

What am I creating?

Questions:

- What medium will I choose to express the content of my work? Why?
- What techniques will I explore in this work?
- How will I handle the formal elements as I design my work of art?
- How will the forms I create express the content I want?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Explore a variety of techniques and media.
- Explore a variety of ways that art materials can be used.
- Demonstrate a technical knowledge and creative use of the formal elements (e.g., line, shape, color, texture) and design principles (e.g., rhythm, balance, emphasis) in a variety of media.

Sample Activities:

Create works of art dealing with the same subject using three different techniques. Compare and contrast how the elements and principles of design function in the three works. How do they contribute to the meaning in each work?

Discuss the medium and techniques used to create a selected artwork. Have learners create works of art using a similar medium and/or technique that express their ideas.

Technical and Creative Approach to Interpreting

What am I trying to say?

Questions:

- How will the medium and techniques I choose help me to express my meaning?
- How do the forms that I am making express my intent?
- How can I use symbols to make meaning?
- What kinds of symbols might I choose that convey universal, culturally-specific, or personal meaning?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Discuss the way their selection of medium and techniques has contributed to the meaning of their work.
- Express and analyze personal and universal feelings and ideas in their artwork.
- Interpret real or imagined events in images and justify the interpretation.
- Synthesize multiple ideas or views in their work.
- Provide interpretations of the ideas or feelings expressed in their work as needed.

Sample Activities:

Make masks using symbols to show membership in a group or participation in a ceremony or event. For example, make a mask that represents membership on a baseball team or a mask that symbolizes a first date as a rite of passage.

Using a theme such as conflict, select a medium and design an artwork that will best illustrate that theme.

Create a puppet based on an original character and write a story that features that character. Either select a scene from the story, create a miniature 3-D set design, and costumes for puppets to play out the scene or create a handmade picture book of the chosen story, character and scene.

Technical and Creative Approach

to Evaluating

Does this work?

Questions:

- Would my work be as effective in another medium or if I had used other techniques?
- Does my work accomplish its purpose? Why or why not?
- Could I change my work in some way to make it more effective?
- What elements would I like to change in my work? How would I change them?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the medium and techniques in their own work.
- Evaluate the success of their work at accomplishing its purpose.
- Make proposals for changes that would make the work more effective.

Sample Activities:

Create a work in a two-dimensional medium and then execute the same subject in a 3-D medium. Compare and contrast the effectiveness of both works in conveying their intent.

Learners analyze their own works of art for functional and artistic success and suggest ways they might change them to make them more effective. Create additional works to reflect those changes.

Technical and Creative Approach to *Connecting*

What connections can I make to my art and why?

Questions:

- What kinds of media and techniques have been used in different times and places?
- How and why do media and techniques differ in different times and places?
- How does what I am trying to say in my work connect to my life experiences?
- What sources from my own time and place, and from other times and places, have I used for my work? Why?
- Does my work have something to say to the society in general? What?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Explain what the technique and medium communicate about the cultural, physical, geographical and individual context of the work.
- Explain how the cultural, physical, geographical, historical and individual considerations shape the choices about forms, media and techniques that they and other artists make.
- Analyze and discuss the sources of their own works and of other works.
- Articulate the way they intend others to respond to their work.

Sample Activities:

Have learners make a survey of their schoolmates or of artists in the community to determine what materials they use in their art. How do these materials vary in different situations? What factors might determine some of these choices? What choices have learners made in creating their own works?

Have learners look at a work of art that is unknown to them and speculate about its origin based on the medium and techniques used. Research the work to validate the speculations.

Investigate the form, meaning and function of works of art from other cultures and create a work with similar meaning or function for today's culture. Have learners write a statement that makes connections between their artwork and the artwork from the other cultures studied.

Cultural/Historical Approach

to Perceiving

What does the form of this work say about its context?

Questions:

- What characteristics might works of art from different cultures have in common? How might they differ?
- What kinds of characteristics contribute to a cultural and/or historical style?
- How do cultural styles change over time?
- What differences can be found in works by different artists from the same culture?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Compare and contrast the formal elements of works of art from different cultures.
- Describe, analyze and classify a variety of cultural/historical styles.
- Describe, analyze and classify a variety of personal artistic styles within several different cultures.
- Discuss the factors that might contribute to change in cultural style.

Sample Activities:

Look at works of art from a single culture over a period of time. Working in groups, order the works along a time line. Discuss the different solutions and the criteria used. Research the works to validate the conclusions reached.

Using reproductions of works of art from two historical styles, divide the works by style. Discuss the criteria groups used to make the divisions. (This activity also applies to Critical Perceiving.)

Cultural/Historical Approach to Interpreting

What does it mean in its time and culture?

Questions:

- What are some elements of our shared culture that enable us to understand images?
- What things might you want to know about a historical period to help you interpret images from that culture?
- Within a given culture, what things might you want to know about individual artists to help you interpret their works?
- How can works of art provide a variety of perspectives on a common theme?
- What kinds of universal themes might link works from different cultures?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Examine and analyze contemporary visual images in the context of popular culture.
- Interpret visual images in their cultural/historical contexts.
- Demonstrate the way individual experience contributes to meaning in art.
- Cite examples and explain how works of art provide a variety of perspectives on a common theme.

Sample Activities:

Using an object from another culture in a museum setting, analyze what it might mean in its culture. Research cultural/historical information and reevaluate the cultural meaning of the object. Discuss the ways an object created by one culture might be interpreted differently by another culture.

Create an artwork using symbols from today's popular culture to express an idea.

Research two artists within a single culture and time period and compare and contrast influences on their personal interpretations.

Cultural/Historical Approach to *Evaluating*

Why is this work important?

Questions:

- What factors make this work important today?
- What factors have been used in other times and places to evaluate a work of art?
- How have evaluations of particular works changed over time and across cultures?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Evaluate a work of art from at least two different cultural/historical perspectives based on historical investigation.
- Discuss the criteria that their own culture uses to evaluate art works.
- Interpret the historical and contemporary value of an artwork and predict its future value.
- Explore how the evaluation of a work of art has changed over time.

Sample Activities:

Look at a diverse group of objects and categorize them according to craft or fine art. Justify each decision. Discuss selected factors; such as, possible gender of the artist, function or culture of the work, etc. that contributed to the categorization. How do categorizations affect the way one values different works?

Examine a work of art from another culture that has mythological content and research what this content means in that culture. Write an essay discussing how this work is important to that culture. Make a work of art that represents a contemporary cultural hero. How is one's work important to his/her culture?

Choose a well-known work of art and make a survey of why people think the work is important. Analyze the kinds of answers received. Develop a list of criteria used to evaluate the work. Research how the work was valued in its time. Discuss how the evaluation might have changed over time.

Cultural/Historical Approach to Connecting

What connections can be made to other times, places and cultures?

Questions:

- What societal conditions have affected the making of a particular work of art?
- How does a work of art reflect the concerns of its society?
- How can a work of art serve as a record of its culture for future societies and what continued impact might it have?
- What universal concerns do people address in their works of art?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Examine and discuss societal conditions that might affect the making of an artwork.
- Demonstrate ways in which works of art confirm or challenge societal values.
- Discuss and give examples of universal themes addressed through art.

Sample Activities:

Research the historical conditions leading to a work that deals with a controversial event or issue, such as Picasso's painting of Guernica. Referring to a recent weekly publication, select a controversial event. Have learners develop and express their ideas about the event through a work of art.

Examine works of art from a variety of cultures that address a common theme. Have each learner make a work of art interpreting the theme from his/her perspective.

Look at a selection of artworks and research the social concerns of the various places and times in which those works were created. How are these social concerns reflected in the artworks? Make a work expressing a social concern of our time.

Critical Approach to *Perceiving*

What are the elements and content of the work?

Questions:

- What are the formal elements that make up this work of art?
- How does the form express the content?
- What are the characteristics of this work that make it part of a particular style?
- In what ways do the media and techniques used challenge me?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Analyze how the formal elements and principles are used in a work of art.
- Discuss how forms express the content in a work of art.
- Discuss the kinds of characteristics that contribute to general, historical or personal styles.
- Consider and analyze works that challenge conventional definitions of art through media and/or technique.

Sample Activities:

Look at reproductions of works of art from two historical styles. Working in groups, divide the works by style. Discuss the criteria groups used to make the divisions.

Collect and read newspaper articles dealing with works of art that challenge conventional definitions of art through media and/or technique (e.g., conceptual art, environmental art, installations, collaborative works). Discuss the ways in which these works are challenging. Work in groups to design and/or create an art form that challenges conventional standards.

Read examples of critical reviews of works of art and discuss the ways works are described. How were the elements and style of the works described? Write a description of a work of art using appropriate vocabulary.

*Critical Approach
to Interpreting****How am I reacting to this and why?*****Questions:**

- What do I think this work is trying to express?
- Is this work expressing a significant idea or emotion?
- How do I respond to the expressive qualities of this work?

Performance Objectives:**Learners will:**

- Examine through individual writing and group discussion significant ideas or emotions expressed in a variety of works of art.
- Write a critical response to a work of art.

Sample Activities:

Match works of art with words descriptive of emotions and ideas (e.g., mad, scared, love, safety and freedom). Explain what aspects of the works connect to those terms. (Help young children to find appropriate vocabulary to describe what they are seeing. Works of art and descriptive words should be chosen carefully so that the meaning of the images is not trivialized.)

Experience a live or video presentation of a performance that conveys a particular idea or emotion. Choose from among several works of art the one that best conveys a similar idea or emotion and explain why. Have learners create a work of art that expresses a particular emotion.

Have learners write letters to an artist asking questions about a specific work. Research the artist, style and culture. Reverse roles and have learners respond to their letters from the artist's viewpoint, explaining what the artist was trying to express, or role-play an interview with the artist.

Critical Approach to *Evaluating*

How good do I think this is?

Questions:

- What characteristics make this work successful? Why?
- Are there elements of this work that are not successful? Why?
- What are the criteria that I use to judge a work of art?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Explain and justify their own criteria for judging artwork.
- Write a critical essay evaluating a work of art.

Sample Activities:

Look at examples of functional art (quilts, blankets, pottery, masks, tools, etc.). Develop criteria to evaluate both functional and artistic success of these works. Discuss how function and form relate.

Collect examples of critical reviews from journals, magazines and newspapers. Analyze the content of the writing by identifying statements that describe, analyze, compare and evaluate. Using that model, write a critical review.

Have learners establish a list of criteria for evaluating their own work and compile a portfolio of their “best” work at the end of the semester based on these criteria.

*Critical Approach
to Connecting****What connections can I make to my own experience?*****Questions:**

- What factors do I use to evaluate works of art?
- How have my experiences helped me to formulate criteria for evaluating art?
- How do my evaluative criteria differ from those of others?
- How do I apply my evaluative criteria to my work?

Performance Objectives:**Learners will:**

- Demonstrate awareness of the arts' connections to elements of their lives.
- Compare and contrast the life experiences that appear in images and their own life experiences.
- Analyze how their own experiences influence their critical judgments about their works and the works of others.

Sample Activities:

Have learners choose a work of art that they relate to strongly and write or tell a story or a poem that connects the work to some experience in their own lives. Make a work of art about their own experience.

Each learner will pick three works from his/her portfolio and develop a list of criteria that might be used to evaluate these works. Have learners compare their criteria with the criteria developed by others in the class.

Find three or four works of art that deal with a similar theme or subject but which come from different times and places. Have learners pick the work that they most identify with and explain why. Each learner will write a letter to the artist asking questions about the work. Have learners do research on the artist and his/her time period. Have learners answer their own letters from the artist's viewpoint. Have learners make their own work of art on a similar topic but from their own point of view.

Aesthetic Approach *to Perceiving*

What are the ways we can approach art?

Questions:

- What are some ways art can be approached (i.e., form, expression, function, connection to reality)?
- What types of approaches have been used in various times and places?
- In what way do I usually approach artworks?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Demonstrate a knowledge of various approaches to works of art. Example approaches: Does this work look real? (mimetic); What is this object used for? (pragmatic); How does this make you feel? (expressive); and What kinds of shapes do you see? (formal).
- Explain how an approach to art is connected to its culture.
- Describe and analyze a work of art from several different points of view.
- Describe an approach to art that differs from the approaches most common in their own culture.
- Articulate their own approach to art.

Sample Activities:

Working with a variety of approaches to art (e.g., mimetic, pragmatic, expressive and formal) and a variety of images, have learners group the images according to the approach they think suits the image best. Discuss some of the images from approaches that do not suit them. How do the discussions of the images differ?

Have each learner identify his/her personal, community or cultural heritage by talking to family or community members. Bring to class an object or artwork that represents that cultural heritage and discuss it. If possible, bring in a parent, grandparent or community member to explain an art's tradition.

Have learners write an essay describing their most typical approach to art and use images from their portfolios to illustrate their essays. Take a different approach to art and examine the same works.

*Aesthetic Approach
to Interpreting****How does art make meaning?*****Questions:**

- How are symbols used in society to express ideas?
- How does a particular work construct meaning through form, symbols, techniques and medium?
- Can artwork be functional and have meaning?

Performance Objectives:**Learners will:**

- Examine a particular work and discuss how form, symbols, technique and medium construct meaning.
- Consider whether artwork can be functional and have meaning. Argue both sides of the issue.
- Use symbols from contemporary society to express ideas.

Sample Activities:

Collect special interest magazines (e.g., environmental, business, teen, etc.). Working in groups, create a collage using images and text from the magazines to make evident the viewpoint being expressed.

Collect examples of works of art that have a function, focusing on a particular medium (such as pottery, clothing, utensils, ceremonial objects). Working in small groups, choose a particular culture and investigate the cultural function and meaning of the works. Discuss in a large group how functional objects can have meaning and how removing them from their own culture can affect that meaning.

Aesthetic Approach to *Evaluating*

Is this good?

Questions:

- What value do I place on a particular work of art?
- What purpose does this work serve in society? Is it a worthwhile purpose?
- How have people evaluated works of art in different times and places?

Performance Objectives:

Learners will:

- Compare and contrast how people have evaluated works of art in different times and places.
- Demonstrate a knowledge of the various purposes art can serve in society.
- Cite examples of ways in which society has used art to influence its members. Discuss positive and negative aspects of this (e.g., propaganda, commercialization).

Sample Activities:

Have learners look at three or four works of art and choose their favorites, describing what affected their choices. Compare reactions among learners. Were different works chosen? Were reasons for the learners' choices similar?

Have learners evaluate the purpose of a work of art that is intended to be temporary (such as Christo's "Wrapped Coast"). Have learners explain the purpose and worth of that work to a person living in the 19th century? Discuss what aspects of this work would be of most value in the future (e.g., the idea, the planning and execution, the temporary work, the documentation of the event).

Collect examples of works of art that have a function, focusing on a particular medium (i.e., pottery, clothing, utensils and ceremonial objects). Working in small groups, choose a particular culture and investigate the cultural function and meaning of the works. Discuss in a large group how functional objects can have meaning and how removing them from their own culture can affect that meaning. (Activity for Aesthetic approach to interpreting.) Now consider the differences between how the works are valued in their own culture and how they are valued by the culture that has appropriated them.

*Aesthetic Approach
to Connecting****How does art relate to life?*****Questions:**

- How can art express my personal emotions, ideas and opinions?
- How does art affirm or challenge societal values?
- What can we learn about the significant values of another culture through its art?

Performance Objectives:**Learners will:**

- Give examples and discuss works of art that affirm or challenge societal or personal values.
- Express personal emotions, ideas and opinions through art.
- Discuss and give examples of what can be learned about the values of another culture through its art.

Sample Activities:

Look at a work of art from another time or place that portrays some event learners can connect with. Have them share and discuss their experiences that are similar to events portrayed in the work of art. Have learners create works that portray their own experiences.

Compare and contrast male and female images from a historical culture with contemporary popular images of men and women (e.g., from sports, health and beauty magazines). Discuss idealization and societal values in the two cultures.

Choose a contemporary issue that is important to a majority of learners and have them express their opinions about the issue in individual visual statements.